

ELLEN JENSEN WATUMULL

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Ellen Jensen Watumull

(1897 -)

This transcript consists of four separate interviews conducted by two different interviewers. The first--on June 22, 1972--was intended as a memoir specifically for Mrs. Watumull's three children on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee and is, therefore, personalized. Also, because Mrs. Watumull is very articulate and was following an interview questionnaire, the interviewer said as little as possible so as not to interrupt her train of thought.

Although there is some repetition of information in these interviews, it is interesting to note the power of Mrs. Watumull's memory and her versatility in relating the incidents under varied circumstances. That is to say, the first interview was conducted when she was vigorous and in robust health; the second, after a serious illness; the third and fourth, when she had recovered considerably from that illness.

Katherine B. Allen, Interviewer

Pauline King Joerger, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN JENSEN WATUMULL
(MRS. GOBINDRAM JHAMANDAS WATUMULL)

At her Makiki home, 2139 Puualii Place, Honolulu 96822

June 22, 1972

W: Ellen Jensen Watumull

A: Katherine B. Allen, Interviewer

W: I am Ellen Watumull, born Ellen Ingeborg Jensen in Portland, Oregon on June 26, 1897. Portland was a small city at that time and my earliest remembrance is when I was about two years old. It was on the Fourth of July and my father took my older brother and me down to the bluff overlooking the Willamette River where we saw beautiful fireworks on a barge across the river. My father, who was a very lovely kind gentleman, although it was summertime put his coat around me and I sat snuggled against him to see what to me was a most wondrous sight.

My father's name was Carl and Mama's name was Marie. She had been born Marie Christensen in a little town in Denmark called Viborg, not far from the city of Aarhus which is now a very large city. Her parents, of course, had a farm but my grandfather was a contractor and built brick houses.

Strangely enough, your father, whose name of course you know is Gobindram Jhamandas, was born far away in India in Hyderabad, Sind on the Indus River and he was born also on June 26 but in 1891 and, strangely enough, his father too was a brick contractor and built houses. Both families had very difficult times financially; your father's family, after his father had suffered a severe accident which crippled him. As far as we can tell, he died of cancer of the leg as a result of this accident.

Now to switch back to my family, Papa and Mama had both come from Denmark when they were young because they were both adventuresome spirits, and they met perhaps two or three years after their arrival in this country in Portland, Oregon. Of course, being immigrants, there weren't big jobs open for immigrants nor was there much industry so Papa even had to be a janitor part of the time and Mama, before she was married, was a maid in someone's.

home. But they weren't of that caliber, having come from good families in Denmark, and of course they advanced as time went on and had four children, all told, but we were three that grew up together--my older brother, Ewald; myself, the second one; and Elsie, the younger.

For some reason, I seemed to catch on to things very early in life and I remember that at four years of age I could both play the piano and read, and I would read the funny papers to my older brother on Sundays when they would come because he hadn't learned how to read yet. So I was naturally, apparently, bright and my parents helped all of us to learn things and to do things. I remember Mama teaching me how to read and write Danish and write letters to my grandmother in Denmark when I was about six years old.

We lived, in our early childhood, in what was then the version of an apartment building but we didn't have private bathrooms. We had common bathrooms and all the people living on one floor had to use the same toilet and the same bathroom and wash the clothes in the bathroom, but that was the fashion in those days so no one minded. We also hung the clothes on a line by the fire escape, as you still see in New York and many other places nowadays.

Papa and Mama were rather independent free-thinking people, self-thinking people, and long before it was ever the fashion for Christian Science to be popular, they became Christian Scientists. And I remember that when I was about six and a half years old I had scarlet fever but, being Christian Scientists, of course there was no medication and we recovered in due course of time with loving care from our parents.

And I do remember on one day that my mother took me to the window from which we could see the fire tower where the alarms were sounded. There was a big bell at the top and a hammer and we could hear it from our apartment, but on this particular day my mother, having led me to the window, showed me that the alarm was ringing but I couldn't hear it. Of course this was a hangover from the scarlet fever and every day for a few days my father carried me to the doctor to have my ears cleaned out and of course, eventually, I recovered my hearing. I was very fortunate that there were no complications.

We went to Ladd School in Portland and apparently I was bright so I was frequently called the teacher's pet but without any intention on my part to be. But I had energy and perhaps enthusiasm and I always seemed to get good marks. If for any reason I got anything below a ninety, I remember my father just very gently chiding me and saying, "Well, you know we always count on you to do better."

I had a wonderful teacher in Ladd School. Her name

was Grace DeGraff. She was a very wonderful woman who taught us civics, taught us the Constitution of the United States, taught us our responsibilities, and taught us this: that you are free only as you obey all the laws. Of course she didn't only mean the laws of the land but she meant spiritual and moral laws also. I have never forgotten her because she was a great influence in my life. She became the national president of the Grade Teachers' Association of the United States and she was the only woman who went to Europe during World War I who was on both Henry Ford's and Jane Adams' P-ships.

Now I must go back and relate a little bit more about the family. When I was twelve years old my younger brother, Calvin, was born. Like me, he had red hair; the other two had blond hair. We had red hair inherited from Mama who in turn had inherited it from her family because her mother and her sisters also all had red hair. Papa had almost blue-black hair and dark eyes. I remember once a woman said to my mother, "When I first knew you, I used to feel very sorry for you because your husband looked so stern." Now that was because Papa wore glasses and perhaps in those days they didn't fit them quite properly but she said, "After I came to know you, I realized what a wonderful man he was and how gentle he was." (chuckles)

Each of us in the family, in a way, had talents. My older brother was very mechanically-minded and I remember one time, it was wintertime, it was Sunday morning, and my brother had brought in all of his tools and things into the living room of the house, although he had a little shop in the back of the lot with a stove in it where he had a set of really magnificent tools given to him by an old friend of my father's. I protested but Mama said, "Oh no, you mustn't do that. Home must always be made comfortable for the men." I had a slight feeling of independence and I thought, "Well, it also perhaps could be comfortable for the women." (chuckles)

Elsie's particular interest of course was art and I well remember the day when she graduated from high school and Mama said to her, Mama being a very strong-minded woman, "I would like you to stay out of school for a year and spend the time on music." Elsie stamped her foot on the floor and said, "If I can't spend the time on art, I won't do anything." And of course that was what she was intended to do because she became a very fine artist and designer.

My particular forte was music and I had the opportunity of good music lessons from the time I was about six years old. I could memorize easily and I had a gift, that of perfect pitch, which is something for which I deserve no credit because I was born with it. Consequently, when I was about ten or twelve years old, Calvin Cady, who was

a professor of music at Columbia University, would come out every summer to Portland to give normal courses to music teachers, and since my own teacher was a student of his--of course a very advanced student--she offered me as a demonstration pupil in those classes. I could hear all the components of a chord, I could harmonize and do things that people usually aren't born with and have to learn. I seem some way to be born with it.

When I was a little over twelve years old my younger brother, Calvin, was born. Mr. Cady had invited me to go back to Boston with him and live with them for a year but I was so enthusiastic about this coming baby that I refused at that time to go. I'm glad I didn't because who knows what my life would have been had I gone to Boston.

Calvin was named after Dr. Calvin Cady and had the opportunity, when he was about five years old, of going to the Music Education School in Portland. Dr. Cady was a great friend of John Dewey's in New York--I don't know whether he actually was a doctor or mister--and wanted to do for education in combination with music what Dr. John Dewey was doing for regular education. One of the things greatly emphasized of course in the Music Education School was music, and through Calvin's being there and through my own interest in and work with music I came in contact with wonderful folk music and collected a very fine but small library of beautiful folk music and children's music from around the world.

In all the years I went to school, both in grade school and in high school, I never had to take a final examination because my grades always seemed to be good enough so I didn't have to take them. This of course gave me extra free time which I enjoyed because I didn't have to cram for those final examinations, although I did work hard during the regular school years.

After finishing grade school, we moved from the building in which we lived in downtown Portland into one of the suburbs. I remember that it was on Minnesota Avenue, it was a darling little house, and the toilet was on the back porch, not in the bathroom. In the bathroom, we had the wash basin and the bathtub. When Calvin was little, he didn't like to go out to that toilet room after dark because, having been taught in Christian Science about Error, he thought that Error was there after night-fall came on.

I also remember once that Ewald, the older brother who was mechanically inclined, wired the toilet seat to enable us all to have a gentle shock when we sat down on it. (laughter) He was also a mischievous boy and I remember, while we were in grade school, that he used to find old alarm clocks thrown out in the garbage cans and he would pick them up and salvage them. He brought sever-

al of them to school one time and set the alarms to go off consecutively before hiding them in different parts of the room. Of course the teacher found out, you see, who it was that had done this dreadful thing and so my parents, particularly Mama, asked me to go to the principal to tell him that my brother really was not a bad boy, he was just mischievous. (laughter)

When we moved to our house, we all of course relished having a yard to play in and we had neighbor children with whom we played and with whom we walked back and forth to school. I entered Jefferson High School--I've forgotten what the year was--I think in 1910. It was about a mile from our house and regardless of the weather we had to walk back and forth. It was only if the weather was too stormy or if there was snow, which didn't occur too often in Portland, that we were given a nickel with which to ride the streetcar. We also carried our lunches to school because in those days there were no cafeterias.

I was always very good at math and I remember a wonderful math teacher by the name of Francis Bittner. Fortunately, I had him all through high school for all the mathematics I had and some way I remember that man because he really made mathematics interesting. Of course in those days it was the old math and not the new math.

Then I had another teacher whose name was Miss Sally Ruby. She was my English teacher. And then another teacher was Miss Gleason, who was my Latin teacher. She did inspire us, although she was rather a stern-looking woman with love of the Latin language and Roman history.

I still have a notebook that I made when I was taking Roman history and when I went to Rome in 1957 for the first time with your father, I was so familiar with the Roman Forum and the Colosseum and the arches and so on, I think partly because I had enjoyed my study of Roman history so thoroughly and seemed to be familiar with every spot. But it was just as though I had almost come home when I went into the Roman Forum. However, I remember a few years ago that an Indian said to me, "Do you know that in one of your past lives you were an Italian?" Of course I have no conscious feeling about that except on this particular occasion when we were in Italy.

There was also a wonderful young librarian, Alma Jonson. One day Miss Jonson put out a request for a student who would stay in the library while she went and had her lunch and I, loving books as you well know, volunteered to be the pupil substitute. I would check out the books and there wasn't any problem of discipline really in those days so I had no trouble there. But I do remember one time I took ten cents out of the fine box because I needed ten cents for something and didn't have a dime of my own. (laughter) It was the only time I ever stole anything in

my life. Of course I later paid it back. But Alma has become a lifelong friend and, as you know, she is in her eighties, lives in Rockford, Illinois. She is Swedish and is one of the freest spirits I have ever known. She's one of the happiest people; she is so interested in everything that happens in the world. Whenever she feels like it, she gets on a Greyhound bus and travels anyplace she wants to go in the country. She belongs to the Unity Church and so she always is thinking positively and that is what is keeping her youthful even though she is way up in her eighties.

When I was about to graduate from high school in 1914 --I was just seventeen--I of course made my own graduation dress and I played the processional and recessional for the whole class to march in by and to march out by. I remember feeling quite honored to be able to do this.

I don't know how you put in--I didn't mean to skip where my father had . . .

A: It's all right. I can go to it on the tape.

W: I know but that means a lot of . . .

A: Well, nonetheless, I'm aware of where it is, you see. That's why I'm looking at the tape. Then I can go to that and then reverse and go back again to keep it chronological.

W: Um hm.

A: But it's all right. It doesn't matter, I think, so much.

W: Well, Mama was the dominant one. Papa was the sweet, gentle, loving person.

A: Well, you tell about him whenever the time comes, if you would.

W: Yes, I will. Uh huh. (recorder turned off and on again)

A: All right, it's on.

W: I did graduate from high school second in my class of about 165, having had an average throughout high school of about ninety-five or ninety-six percent through the four years. My ambition was to go to college and I applied for admission to Reed College which had opened in Portland in 1912. [1909]

It was a very new kind of institution, having been founded by Unitarians. There was no really religiously oriented background for it, although we did have chapel every morning. I studied French, German, political sci-

ence, English. In our English classes we had to do a great deal of writing, which I enjoyed, and reading of many books. I was an avid reader and had read voluminously through my high school years, although at that time I really couldn't possess any books except my own textbooks. Perhaps that accounts for the fact that I have collected, perhaps sometimes needlessly, a great many books during my married life.

I love books, even though I don't always get to read all of them, but they've been a source of great education to me because of course I could not afford to finish college. Although the tuition in those days was fifty dollars a semester, I had to borrow the money and then work and pay it back, so it became too tedious to continue to go to school one year, work one year, go to college the next year, and then work another year.

By that time, World War I had come on and of course we were all tremendously impressed and of course saddened also by the war. Grace DeGraff, as I told you, had gone on both Henry Ford's and Jane Adams' P-ships to Europe and she was one of those who had a real instinct for peace. At that time I didn't know Jeanette Rankin but she was in Congress and was the only person, as I understand it, to have voted against war in Europe. She also later voted against war with Japan, the only congress person to have done so. (Mrs. Watumull's dog, Boki, barks)

Of course many of my classmates in college and high school had to go to war. Some of them were killed, some of them were injured. I remember one of them lost an eye. But we greatly rejoiced, of course, when the armistice came on the eleventh of November, 1917 [1918] and we all went and danced in the streets and rejoiced that the boys now would come home.

In the meantime, someone had suggested that I take civil service examinations and get a position with the government. Apparently I did fairly well because I was quickly called in to serve in the aviation section of the Signal Corps of the U.S. Army as a civilian. My job was to keep track of every shipment of timber, including spruce and cedar that was cut in the forests of Oregon and Washington and shipped to the airplane factories in the East to be made into airplanes. There were no metal planes in those days. There were over ten thousand shipments and I only made one error in all of that time. However, my superior officer did not chide me very much.

My salary in those days was sixty-five dollars to begin with and I earned one hundred dollars at the completion of my work after the war was finished. That was considered very good salary for women in those days, although I could not have been considered in a professional category.

END OF SIDE 1/1ST TAPE

A: Do you want to rest?

W: No, I'm just thinking of something that I perhaps should put in there. (long pause)

After the war was over, I again concentrated on my music. I don't remember if I have told you that I had had ambitions to become a concert pianist because I memorize easily, I have apparently a good sense of interpretation, and my teacher encouraged me, but when I was about fifteen or sixteen I lost one finger, as you all know, through an accident. If I haven't told you, it happened this way.

In those days, we both cooked and heated the house with wood stoves and before we could start the kitchen stove for dinner we had to make some kindling. We kept all of the wood down in the basement and on this particular day my mother had gone to town to do some errands, Papa hadn't come home from work, and I being older, it was my job to see that the fire was lit in the stove and everything was ready to cook dinner when they came home.

Elsie and I went down into the basement and we had a big chopping block so I took up some smaller pieces of wood and with a hatchet was cutting the kindling into small pieces. And Elsie, who was always very sweet and gentle but very persistent, decided that she would use the ax and that we would take alternate cuts in the wood. I protested because I was beneath her, or lower down, and cutting the kindling with the smaller instrument, the hatchet, and before I could get her to stop, she whanged down again with the ax and chopped off my finger.

Of course it was a dreadful experience for both of us but I, being the older and more resourceful, and no parents at home to help, dashed to the neighbors' and the husband promptly fainted when he saw what had happened and the wife took care of him rather than looking after me, so the only person that I knew close by was my Sunday School teacher so I dashed off to her. However, there was nothing that could be done and so I never became a concert pianist, but I'm glad I didn't because who knows what my life would have been; certainly not as interesting as the one that I have had.

And so after the war, I taught music and studied and in 1919 my music teacher, whose name was Clara McCullough, received a letter from Geraldine Aitken, who many years before had been one of those students of Mr. Cady's who learned how to teach pupils by observing his teaching of me, asking that if I were available and still interested in music she would like me to come to Honolulu to assist

her in her studio because she had far more pupils than she could handle. Of course at the age of twenty-two, Hawaii sounded very romantic and it meant a job, it meant work, work that I love to do, so I bent every effort to get to Hawaii.

I had to borrow the money to come but the passage in those days was only ninety dollars and of course it was a great experience for me, who had never been outside the State of Oregon before. In fact, I don't think I had even seen the ocean but sailing across the Pacific [Ocean] held such enchantment for me that I just never dreamed of saying no.

On the twenty-third of December in 1919, we set sail on the old, old Lurline for Hawaii. It carried ninety passengers besides freight and we were nine and a half days on the journey, arriving in Honolulu on the first of January, 1920.

As the ship sailed into the harbor, there was a beautiful rainbow over the bow. Little did I know then that for the Hawaiians it was a symbol of happiness and good fortune. I hadn't been in Honolulu more than two or three days when I was offered the position of teaching the school music in Hanahauoli School, which of course all of you subsequently attended.

Honolulu was a beautiful small city at that time, full of trees, narrow streets, even horse-drawn vehicles, and I had the good fortune of living on Bingham Street, where Kapiolani Hospital now stands, with Mrs. Clara Sutherland. Mrs. Sutherland's grandfather was Hiram Bingham the First, who headed the first group of missionaries that came to the Hawaiian Islands in 1820. I came just a hundred years later. (laughter) [1625 Bingham Street]

She was a darling person, very interested in music, played the piano, but to me she seemed rather old. She told many interesting stories of the early days of the missionaries. Her little house on Bingham was screened but I think there was no way of locking the door or even closing all the windows. I remember the first night I spent alone when she went to visit one of her daughters and I wasn't accustomed to such an open house so I did not spend a very sleepful night but I learned something by it: that you can trust people.

Bingham Street was not far from Hanahauoli School so every morning I had a beautiful walk up Punahou Street. Sometimes I'd cross on Wilder Avenue and up on Makiki. Those beautiful monkeypod trees all along the way were so marvelous to me because in Oregon, of course, we had mostly either fruit trees or, early in the spring, trees like dogwood or of course evergreen trees. But here were strange trees, beautifully umbrella-shaped with many seed-pods hanging down from them, and in walking along I used

to love to crush them under my feet.

The streetcar in those days ran on a single track. The streetcars were all open-sided because we had summer weather here or what seemed to me, coming from Oregon, as summer weather. There were no side enclosures. The streetcar fare was five cents. The way the streetcars passed each other was this: at about every half mile there was a little turn-off place so that the streetcar going in one direction, if it arrived at this point first, would go off onto the siding on the right and wait for the streetcar that was going in the opposite direction, which would then pass it on the track that went off to the left.

It was lots of fun to go to Waikiki in those days because the streetcar ran along King Street and then turned off King Street on McCully [Street] and there was just a trestle bridge there until we came to Kalakaua Avenue and then it went up Kalakaua Avenue to Kapiolani Park, with one or two turn-off places. In those days there was nothing built mauka of Kalakaua Avenue, even up to King Street, because there were duck ponds. It was always fun to see the ducks on little islands, tending their eggs, as we would drive along. It wasn't the most fragrant smelling place but it was interesting to look at.

On the other side of King Street, down to the area that is now Kapiolani Park, even Ala Moana, there were farms and even rice was growing in some of those places, taro and vegetables. Of course there were no high-rise buildings. The only hotel was the Moana Hotel which had been built in the year 1900. Then of course there was the little Seaside Hotel right down on the beach and there were some cottages down where the Hilton Hawaiian Village now stands.

The duck ponds extended up almost as far as the Princess Kaiulani Hotel. We would walk along the sidewalks on the ocean side and the waves would come in and splash over the surface of the wall. At that time Duke Kahanamoku was perhaps the most talked about person in Honolulu, having not too long before won the Olympics, and I think the most popular picture sold in Honolulu was a picture of him doing the swan dive with which he won the Olympic prize for diving. (long pause)

A: How did you meet Mr. Watumull?

W: Yes, I will come to that but I just wanted to tell one thing about how I spent the first summer in Honolulu.

I had an opportunity, when school was over in June of 1920, to spend a few weeks with Geraldine Aitken in the old Forbes home on the corner of Wilder and Poki streets. It was an old missionary house and I found it very interesting. In those days there weren't particularly beauti-

ful chandeliers but the lights hung down on a cord from the ceiling and we just turned the switch right above the light on or off as we needed it. This change gave me a break from living with Mrs. Sutherland, and the Forbes family was away for a few weeks and had asked Geraldine and me to live in the house while they were gone.

A: It was Eureka Forbes's husband's family home.

W: Yes, Fred [Frederick Blatchford] Forbes's family home.

I had also met a number of teachers from Punahou [School], of course all of them older than me, but they belonged to a camping club called the Kamuela Camping Club and had a campsite up at Kokee on Kauai, not far from the wonderful Kalalau Valley. It seemed a wonderful way of seeing the island and several of us went up to spend the balance of the summer there.

In those days there were just relatively small inter-island ships that carried passengers and cargo between the islands. There was no dock at which to anchor when we got to Nawiliwili, so at about 4:00 a.m. we went down the steps on the side of the ship and jumped down into a row-boat below us, assisted by some of the crew, and then we were rowed to the dock.

We had all of our belongings packed into a truck and started our journey up to Kokee. We spent the night in an old hotel in Waimea because our luggage had apparently not arrived on the same car with us. After dinner, being rather tired, we went to bed, little realizing we would be disturbed later.

A number of Standard Oil workers who were building some tanks at Port Allen were staying in the same hotel and had attended a movie next door. We being two single women did not feel inclined to go to the movie and went to bed instead.

Now bear in mind that our luggage had not come, it was a hot humid night, we went to bed and turned off the light just above the little electric light hanging down from the ceiling, and were sound asleep. When the movie was over, these workers came stamping up the stairs, not realizing that anybody else might be disturbed. Their stamping--this is funny--jiggled on the light (laughter) and I lay in my bed with nothing on, having no nightgown, no luggage. All I could do was to just pull up the sheet over me, hoping that the men would not look in through the screen door or in through the window as they passed by on the upper lanai, because I was in no state to get up and turn off that light. (laughter)

The following morning, however, we had that wonderful drive up to Kokee, one of the most beautiful spots that I had seen up to that time. It was a camping expedition and

we all took turns in cooking the food, in cleaning up, in doing the jobs around camp, and then most of our time was spent in hiking to the various beauty spots around that part of Kauai. We became quite familiar with Waimea Canyon, with Olokele Canyon, and with the beautiful lookout just above Kalalau Valley. I wish I could describe it for you because, of course, in those days not only was there no color film but I had no camera, so I have no pictures of that experience at all.

The various campers and the people who would shut things up would go hunting and occasionally we were given gifts of broiled goat meat, which was delicious, and other animals that had been shot. The hunters were very generous and shared with us, knowing that it was a little difficult to get fresh meat so far from the city.

It was in the fall of 1920 that I first met your father. I moved into what was then called a boarding house, the only one in Manoa Valley and the only one really in Honolulu in which a single person like me could live. It's still standing on the corner of Lanihuli Drive and McKinley Street. At that time it was run by two sisters, Clara and Ida Ziegler, both of whom taught at McKinley High School. [2065 Lanihuli Drive]

It was a very interesting place in which to live because there were all kinds of signs around. For instance, there was a sign that one could not use the bathroom after ten o'clock at night or before six o'clock in the morning as vessels were provided in the rooms. (laughter) But since all the rooms were screened out to the hallways--there were no louvers or anything in those days--if you had used the vessels it would have been as disturbing, I think, as if one had used the bathroom. We were also advised not to switch on the light with that little switch but just to gently turn the bulb on and off because it made the bulb last longer.

In the five or six months that I lived there--no, it was longer than that--I think that only on five occasions did we have anything but pot roast for dinner. And on Thanksgiving Day, although I was invited out for dinner at night, I partook of the Thanksgiving dinner they served at noon. The piece de resistance was fried ham with some vegetables and I remember the dessert consisted of dried fruits that a brother of the Ziegler "girls" had sent them for a Thanksgiving present.

Every morning I could hear from my room that whenever one of the sisters would pass the dining room table she would stir up the cream in the pitcher, lest the first person who arrived for breakfast would get a thicker cream than those who subsequently arrived.

Living in this same building was a Mrs. Mundorff who had an optical shop right next to the East India Store in

the Blaisdell Hotel on Fort Street. She had designs on your father. She was a widow and of course was on the hunt for a man but she was a number of years older than he. One night she invited him to take her and me on a drive. In fact, I was going to my swimming class down at Waikiki Beach and he very kindly took Mrs. Mundorff and me to the beach and then afterwards picked me up and took us both home. So that was how I first met your father. He subsequently told her, because on every occasion the three of us would go out together, that he would like to take me out sometimes by myself, not with her. (laughter)

Of course I continued to teach music students. I had the use of the kindergarten, in which I put my own piano, and taught my private pupils there and then taught the school music in Hanahauoli [School] until the summer of 1922 when we were married. (dog barks)

As all of you children came along and when you became old enough you too went to Hanahauoli and you will of course all remember that I again taught the school music there. Sometimes it was a bit difficult to maintain the distinction with you between being the teacher and the mother in class but I tried to maintain the position of teacher in class and mother outside of school.

We bought our first home on [2011] Hunnewell Street in Manoa about 1923. It gave us great pride and joy, although it was a simple house, but I think, as you all know, it is still there today with the addition that we had put on it a few years later and it is still a very attractive-looking house. If you haven't seen it lately, why don't you drive by?

Perhaps you remember the beautiful pirie mango tree that we had in the garden and the back hillside where you children used to play. Perhaps you remember, too, about the old kiawe tree in the neighbor's yard that shed kukus that you occasionally stepped on.

You won't remember--you see, I'm used to using another kind of machine [for dictating].

A: I understand.

W: Because I say, "Correction" and so on.

A: That's all right. I appreciate that.

W: None of you will remember when your father had an appendix operation because Lila [Ann Watumull (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney] was maybe a year or a year and a half old. I sat with him down at the hospital because in those days we had a maid at home so Lila was well taken care of. I sat with him until he came out of the anesthesia and had gone back to sleep again when I dashed home to look after our little

girl.

When I returned to the hospital he was so disconcerted to find me gone that he had ordered day and night nurses because he was afraid of the pains and being alone. This didn't sit very well with Dr. James [Robert] Judd who had performed the operation so on the third day he said to me, "You take your husband . . .

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

"You take your husband home because you can take just as good care of him as these nurses can." He was a very good patient but he did have all kinds of pains and I gently reminded him that perhaps now he knew what a woman went through when she bore a child. "Oh!" he said, "but that is natural. Having your appendix out is not."

In those days of course we were struggling along. We didn't have very much money and we had to pay off the mortgage on our house. I remember that we were without curtains for over a year until I could buy enough material and make them myself, which of course is fun.

I think all of the hard experiences or the harder experiences that I've had in life have all been wonderful. These are the things that make life for anyone, living life as you go along and not being defeated by the difficult times, nor being overly elated or cut up by the more affluent or happier times that one has.

We had a wonderful old yardman in those days. His name was Ishii. I remember one day I asked Ishii where he lived. He said, "Missy, you savvy Pake make place [Chinese cemetery]? Lili moe this side." Knowing pidgin English, you know exactly where he lived too.

I think that you will recall also, when we would have those heavy rains, how the street would get flooded and on one occasion the water came up so high that we evacuated to Dr. and Mrs. [You Chan] Yang's house up on the hill. I was afraid it would come in and I didn't want any of you children to have to be carried out through ever-deepening water.

You will also recall the times when you had your newspapers and when the great crime was to copy anyone. The word was "originality" and I presume it's what we would say in these days, "Do your own thing, not copy somebody else."

There were the times of course when your father had to go away on business trips, buying trips to the Orient, because in those days the East India Store imported only beautiful handmade things from the Orient--beautiful hand-embroidered linens, silk underwear, a hand-carved chest,

Chinese and Indian rugs, Indian screens, and maybe you remember all of those wonderful old Spanish shawls which were very popular for a number of years.

In those days, we had to use our ingenuity because I also had to work in the store and keep the business running and work at night. I remember one time working until four o'clock in the morning, trimming windows for the Christmas holidays after having made the decorations at home. However, that was later when we were in Auntie Elsie's house down on [1731] Keeaumoku Street.

Just for the records, Lila was born in Kauikeolani Hospital, now the Children's Hospital on Kuakini Street; David [Watumull] was born at home on Hunnewell Street; and Radha [Watumull Homa] was born in Kapiolani Hospital.

By that time [1929] we had bought a place down at Kuliouou which Lila and David will remember. It was wonderful living out in the country but difficult to get there because the road was narrow and very smooth. I recall one time when I was driving out with you children that we skidded off the road into a fence but fortunately it was a very small skid and no damage was done and none of you were hurt.

It was out there in that small swimming pool where I think you two older ones learned to swim. We would have picnics out in the little lanai on the side of the garden and some of you explored the old burial caves across the road on the mauka side and had adventures.

It was while we were living there that Radha was born. I remember I wanted her so much not to be born on her father's and my birthday because three in the family celebrating birthdays on one day was just too much, so Dr. Yang gave me castor oil to see if we couldn't have the baby born earlier and Radha then was born two days before our birthdays and could celebrate an independent birthday [on June 24th].

I used to drive you children in to Hanahauoli School and get you at noontime. I remember one time when Papa and Mama paid us a rather short visit. They were down there and your father would go to the office and he took your grandpa, my papa, down with him. And as I was going in at noon, Papa was walking back because the busline ended someplace way down on Waialae Avenue, I don't remember exactly where, and he walked the distance from the end of the busline to our house. I felt so badly afterwards because I should have picked him up and either taken him back to the house or taken him along with me to pick you children up. For him at his age, although perhaps he was only about sixty at that time, I know it must have been a long hard walk and it was one time when I know I was a bad daughter.

I'm sorry that none of you have really had the oppor-

tunity of knowing your grandparents but there wasn't the opportunity to fly in those days and get you back and forth to Portland. We had to book in advance on a ship and then, of course, you spent more time in traveling than you actually could spend time in visiting your relatives or your friends.

Eventually it became rather difficult to live out in Kuliouou so we returned to our house on Hunnewell Street which had, in the meantime, been rented and we decided to build a house down near Diamond Head on Kiele Street. Here again we didn't have very much money because in 1929 the Big Depression hit the country and although it did not hit Honolulu right away we did feel the serious effects of it in 1930 and had to try to recover from it.

Your father never discharged any of the employees nor did he cut the salaries. We cut ourselves. I remember in 1930 or 1931, I was able to have only two dresses and each of them cost five dollars. I must say they weren't very pretty but we survived and we did not go into debt and we managed to pull through.

You see, money isn't everything; it's how you do it. And when you could do things together with people, as your father and I could do together, it was wonderful. In fact, those hard days are always the best days when you look back on them.

Well, the house on Kiele Street was not a huge success and since the yard was very small and the only place you could play was over in Kapiolani Park, we decided that this could not be our permanent home. So we looked about for another place and we eventually purchased the old Hodgins house on the corner of Keeaumoku and Dominis streets. [1732 Keeaumoku Street] It had about an acre of land around it and, at the time we purchased it, it was about fifty years old but we were only the third family to live in that home.

It was a two-story house, a New England colonial house, with windows in the living and dining rooms that extended from the floor almost to the ceiling. The ceilings were twelve feet high. You may recall the beautiful carved mouldings and the pillars in the house, and the hardwood floors. It also had a large garden in which all of you could play and the streets were flat so you could ride bicycles and it was only a block or so from Hanahauoli School.

Of course we had lived in the neighborhood for awhile in Elsie's house directly across the street while she and Kumar were away while he got his doctorate degree at the University of Minnesota. So we knew the neighborhood very well and, as I say, it was just a block from Hanahauoli School so it was easy to walk to school and walk back, no matter what the weather, and if necessary even to come

home for lunch.

To go back to the time when David was born, I had become interested in healthful living, health foods, et cetera, through our old friend, Mrs. Otto Swezey, so I did not want to go to the hospital, with its rather unsavory food, to have my baby. The doctor concurred and we had engaged a very excellent baby nurse and on the evening before he was born we had had supper with Dr. and Mrs. Yang in their home. Just as we got up from the table I had a terrible pain and Dr. Yang, who was not bringing David into the world, said, "I think you'd better go home."

In due course of time we called the doctor and the nurse and of course the doctor didn't come until the nurse later told him it was time he did. However, the pains lingered on and the baby wasn't born until about six o'clock in the morning. In the birth process, the doctor gave me an injection of pituitrin which made me vomit and lose control of my faculties and he said, "Now just don't blame this on the pituitrin." But I had been feeling very, very well, had no problem, the nurse had taken care of me, but this thing happened. When the baby was delivered, he was born face down and the doctor said, "Now we know why it took so long for him to come."

However, on the third day afterwards I began to get stiffness in the joints of my right hand. I thought perhaps it was because I had pulled so tightly on the headboard of the bed in the birth process that I had strained them, but I became progressively worse and it was soon evident that I had arthritis almost over my entire body. Of course I went to doctors to see what they could do for me and one wanted to take out my teeth, which my dentist refused to do; another wanted to take out my tonsils, which my regular doctor refused to do; another wanted to take out my appendix but there was a question as to whether I had an appendix because when I had a previous operation for ovarian cysts, one surgeon said they had taken out my appendix, the other said that they had not. Of course I could have consulted the hospital records but it didn't occur to me at that time.

So I decided, when the prognosis seemed to be that I would become a helpless invalid in a wheelchair, that I would then try my own technique, knowing a little bit about health methods. I decided to diet and fast every weekend and for about five or six months I ate no meat. I ate a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables, no sweets, and within six months, together with osteopathic treatments, even chiropractic treatments, steam baths, all of the vigorous exercise I could think of--fencing, ballet and other forms of exercise--I was cured and I have not had arthritis since. But it was a difficult time to go through because I thought if I was not cured I could always put my

head in the gas oven and expire because I would not leave my husband burdened with a young family and a helpless wife.

As you well recall, we were living in the house on Keeaumoku Street when the war broke out. Lila, of course, was in the University [of Oregon] in Oregon, and David and Radha were at home. In fact that was the year when we decided to send you to Stevenson School to have an experience in public schools rather than continuously being in private schools. We thought it would be particularly good for David because he needed more boys to associate with since there were many girls in his class at Hanahauoli, there were three females to two males in our household and it seemed, as I say, desirable to have a public school experience. It was an interesting one and I remember being elected president of the PTA for Stevenson that fall. I think they [David and Radha] went there the year before but I don't recall.

A: Didn't he go to Lincoln School also after Hanahauoli School? Did he also go to Lincoln School?

W: Yes, he went to Lincoln. Didn't I say Lincoln? No, I meant Lincoln.

A: You said Stevenson. Hanahauoli School, I gather, is a private school then.

W: Yes, yes, yes, it is.

A: Then he went to Lincoln School after that.

W: And then to Robert Louis Stevenson [Intermediate School]. Yes, he went to Lincoln I think for a year or so and then he went to Stevenson. It was at this time that he played the clarinet. But do you all recall the time when there was competition between you children and the Pratt children at Hanahauoli when David said, "Come on, Radha, we Watumulls can beat the Pratts any time"? I don't know whether you actually outdid them in school grades or not but you all did very well indeed in any case. David, you'll remember how you played the clarinet in the marching band at Stevenson.

Of course David and Radha will never forget the seventh of December, 1941. Your father and I had driven down to the West Loch of Pearl Harbor early that morning to meet a Pan American Clipper bringing a rather remote relative of Gandhi's to Hawaii on his way to India and also bringing U Saw and Tin Tut, whom you may recall as the then Prime Minister of Burma and his secretary--not his private secretary but the secretary, I presume, of the

Foreign Ministry. [The U in U Saw denotes rank.]

When we got down to the landing place way down on the peninsula that juts into Pearl Harbor, there was no activity and when your father inquired they said that the plane had been delayed in leaving San Francisco and would not get in until noon or so. So we drove quietly home, I watching everything. It was a beautiful sunny morning, only one plane was up in the sky--in fact it had just taken off--but when we got home the Gordons called up to us, since we were all out on the terrace where we always ate, to say that it was reported on the radio that the Japanese were attacking Pearl Harbor. We replied, "That's nonsense because we just came past Pearl Harbor and everything is peaceful and quiet." But then we could hear sounds of guns, but we had become accustomed to that because for months there had been all kinds of target practice and the big guns had gone off and we would hear the battleships firing at sea even though we couldn't see them do it, and we were used to planes, but it soon became evident that something dreadful was happening. [Dr. Maurice Gordon]

Do you remember that we all went out into the garden and a bomb fell in the block just below us and we all fell flat on our tummies under the big cypress tree? Dr. Gordon, as you may remember, was chairman of a committee of the Hawaii Medical Association to bring a distinguished medical speaker from the Mainland. The Medical Society was meeting that morning at 8:30 in Queen's Hospital so he decided to go off and attend the meeting as usual. However, that bomb that dropped in the block below had scattered shrapnel that went through the upstairs bathroom where your father was shaving and when we rushed up to try to get him to come down, the bathroom looked as though it had been bombed. But fortunately your father was untouched, although the shrapnel had whizzed right by his cheek perhaps not more than an inch or two away.

Of course life became somewhat different for us then because we had to have blackouts. Maybe you remember that first night that we spent in the basement with all of our neighbors gathered around because ours was the only basement in the neighborhood. And then, David, how later we had to dig a bomb shelter in the garden and how it became an example for other people as to how they might build their bomb shelters.

And then of course you will recall the next day when we got an influx of nine people from the Army post Schofield Barracks and how, fortunately, they were friends of ours. And then how we all helped each other cook and clean up two meals a day for the adults, three meals a day for the children. And how those men who had been on a Dollar Steamship vessel that had come into harbor in the midst of activities on December 7th were housed down in Elsie's

house and we took care of them for several days until they could be moved out by the steamship company. Those were interesting days but very precarious.

I had never snatched for food before but when I knew we were going to take care of all of these people I went to the market and, knowing the boys there, they gave me a big gunny sack and I just literally pulled things off the shelves and bought all the meat that I possibly could because we were fifteen people to be fed.

Both of you, David and Radha, were so helpful and took your turns at watching and observing. You may remember how we all slept on the floor downstairs, but your father had the courage to get us slowly moved upstairs. I helped to build up the emergency Red Cross room with its supplies at Stevenson School and of course we had an emergency Red Cross supply room in our house, if you remember, because I had taken training at the Red Cross Center right in the Masonic Building not far from us; so we were equipped to put on splints of all kinds, to bandage up wounds, to stop blood from flowing, and do all of the first aid things that might be necessary, but thank God it never came.

I remember too that we couldn't get through to Lila nor could she get through to us and afterwards, when we could get through, how relieved we all felt that we could communicate with each other, although there were some things that we dared not talk about because they were censored.

END OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

A: All right.

W: Since only one person was supposed to talk on the phone and I had answered it and your father was not supposed to talk, she [Lila] was so worried because she just knew that something had happened to him, but of course it hadn't.

The next few months with blackouts and all were difficult but quite manageable. I remember one night how a bomb was dropped up on Makiki Heights, not too far away from us, and how frightened we all were but that was perhaps a mistake--perhaps a bomb dropped by one of our own planes or possibly a single bomb dropped by a Japanese plane. Who knows?

We were grateful that no further incidents happened. However, I do recall that on the sixth of June I received a telephone call from my first aid station to say that a big alert that had been held for a few days prior to that had now been lifted and we could go about our normal lives. The alert was due to the fact that a big battle was going on at Midway [Islands]. During Pearl Harbor, of course

you know, we lost a great portion of our fleet with aircraft carriers and so on, so on the 6th of June when the good news came I asked what happened and the answer came that we had sunk all of the Japanese aircraft carriers and the battle of Midway had been won.

We had been invited to the wedding of Virginia Woolley on the sixth of June. In fact, our garden had supplied quite a few of the vegetables that were going to be used that day to serve the guests because we did have a war garden--a victory garden--and it was the first time since the seventh of December that I had seen people relaxed and laughing. In the intervening months, people would smile but not laugh, so we were all greatly relieved.

It was not too long after that that we had to go to the Mainland, as you remember, because your father wasn't well and the doctors could not find out what was wrong with him. But all of that is another chapter. Maybe sometime I will tape more of the war experiences.

You may not remember the time that we went through when American women lost their citizenship when they married men born in foreign countries who had not yet become Americans. Your father was within a month of becoming a citizen when the Supreme Court of the United States handed down a decision that people coming from India would not be considered by the average man on the street as a white man and, therefore, he could not become a citizen; and the attempt was made subsequently to take away the citizenship of those who already had it.

The case that went to the Supreme Court was that of Dr. Thind, an Indian whom all of you know, but being a Sikh, he had a full beard and a turban and of course he had very bright fiery eyes. However, although he lost his right to citizenship by the Supreme Court decision, he soon became an American citizen because he joined the U.S. Army, but the rest of the Indians had to suffer from it. And I, who had married your father, an alien not eligible for citizenship, then lost my American citizenship. Of course for several years I did not leave the Islands, much less go to a foreign country, but had I traveled I would have had to obtain a British passport which I was very averse to doing. [Dr. Bhagat Thind: see p. 49]

Through the good officers of the League of Women Voters, however, the Cable Act, as it was then called, was amended, enabling American women to retain their citizenship if they married foreigners who were eligible for citizenship. But it was not until 1931 that the law was further amended, stating that no American woman would lose her citizenship no matter whom she married, whether the man was eligible for citizenship or not. Immediately afterwards, Rita Yang and I went to the Federal Court in Honolulu and became naturalized. And you will all remember

that on the fifth of May, 1971 I observed the fortieth anniversary of my becoming a two-hundred-percent American.

Then of course it took much longer for Indians to regain their citizenship, but after Congress passed the bill enabling Chinese to become citizens, then of course they could not withhold it from Indians. Lila is the one who will best remember because she was present at the time when her father became a naturalized American citizen. Unfortunately, and this is one of the big regrets of my life, I was in Los Angeles at the time but I shall never forget when the telephone rang and your father said, "This is Citizen Watumull speaking." (she is moved to tears) Forgive me.

A: Do you want to turn it off?

W: Let's. (recorder turned off and on again) It was a momentous experience in both of our lives. As far as we know too, your father was the first person to become naturalized when the law was passed and signed by the President.

There are many other episodes that are interesting and of course many that I have omitted and forgotten to speak about, but I wanted you to have something on the occasion of my seventy-fifth birthday. And so you have a little bit of the story of my life, some of which may be interesting to you.

You undoubtedly have heard me say this on more than one occasion, but Papa and Mama brought us up saying that it was our responsibility, because we were born into the world and we owed it something, to leave the world a little better than it was when we found it or when we were born into it. First of all, it meant in our family, whatever possessions we might be fortunate enough to have--our homes, our gardens, and then it meant we owe something to try to make the world a little better, that we do not live for ourselves alone but that we also live for others.

Your father and I have tried in our way, perhaps inadequately at times because of course we've all had problems, to instill the same in you. And I must say that I am very proud of the way in which you have been and are working out your lives, assuming those responsibilities. And I know that you are all passing them on to your children.

COUNTER AT 148/SIDE 2/2ND TAPE

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW

BEGINNING OF SECOND INTERVIEW

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/3RD TAPE

At her Makiki home, 2139 Puualii Place, Honolulu, 96822

November 28, 1978

W: Ellen Jensen Watumull

J: Pauline N. King Joerger, Interviewer

J: I was looking at your biography and I notice that you went to Reed College.

W: Yes, I did.

J: What was that like? I understand it's a marvelous school.

W: Well, it was very interesting but I couldn't stay very long because I didn't have the money. (laughs)

J: Ah.

W: So I was there for a year, year and a half, so that was not one of the highlights of my life. (laughs)

J: Ah, I see. Did you feel that you learned, that Reed set a pattern for you, or was it too short a time?

W: It was too short a time I think, and I was what they called a "day dodger."

J: What does that mean?

W: Well, it means that you go from home to the college and I had to go on the streetcar in those days and it was quite some distance away, so I had to transfer twice and then walk the final distance to Reed. But it was very interesting. The students and the faculty were very friendly and gracious. I couldn't participate much in the social life because of living so far away.

J: And when you left and came to Hawaii, why did you pick Hawaii? I think that's so fascinating.

W: Well, for this reason: I have perfect pitch. No gift of mine; it just is there. And there was a very fine professor, Dr. Calvin Cady from Columbia University, who came out to Portland each summer and gave normal classes [to music teachers] and my own regular music teacher recommended me, so he used me as a demonstration pupil for all the teachers who attended his normal class. He'd say, "Now make up the chords that would go with this," and I could tell him whether it was C E and G or whatever it might be.

Then I had a friend who had come to Honolulu and she taught piano and she'd been in the normal class too and after she had lived here, she wrote to my teacher and said, "I have so many pupils, I would like Ellen to come and help me, if she would be so inclined." (laughter) So of course when you're young, you know, Hawaii sounds like a perfectly glamorous place.

So I came and she had a room ready for me, living with the granddaughter of Hiram Bingham the First.

J: Oh, how interesting.

W: Uh huh. So I got a little start in Hawaiian activities. But two days after I was here--I arrived on the 1st of January 1920; a beautiful rainbow over the front of the boat, by the way--I was asked to teach the music in Hanalei School down here, which I did.

J: Oh my.

W: And I also had some private piano students.

J: Was Hawaii a fun-place to be in 1920?

W: I couldn't say. I didn't know any young people of my age. The only thing is that it was so beautiful and I used to walk because Mrs. [Clara] Sutherland lived on Bingham Street. Of course there were no freeways or anything in those days.

J: Oh, I remember. Yes, yes.

W: Her home was the second place in from Punahou Street and on the corner there was a dentist, Dr. Whitney, and he had cows pastured on his front lawn (laughter) so you can see how simple life was. I used to walk up Punahou Street up to Nehoa [Street] and to Hanalei School, a very simple school in those days. But I loved walking up under the monkeypod trees. They were so beautiful.

J: How did you meet Mr. Watumull?

- W: I met him here. I had casually met him one day but there was a woman who had an optical shop near the East India Store, as our business was called in those days, and she suggested that she and he and I go out together. He said, "Mrs. Mundorff, I'd like to take her out alone." (laughs) So we did. He had a car and we could drive out to Waikiki. And then there were the streetcars in those days, you know, where you could get in and the seats were clear across the car. [Kathryn E. Mundorff]
- J: Oh yes. You got off on the side, didn't you?
- W: Yes, you got on [and off] from the side.
- J: Yes, I remember those. Did you do that? Did you take rides on the streetcar as an entertainment?
- W: Oh yes. Yes, um hm. Yes, you could.
- J: Oh, nice. You met and then you were married almost three years later, hm?
- W: Yes, two years or so later [on July 5, 1922 in Redwood City, California].
- J: Do you feel that your interest in international affairs came through your marriage? Because you became so interested in the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council and all.
- W: Yes, that came later [1955-59]. I did have a citation from Pacific and Asian Affairs Council but I think it's stored where I have a lot of things and Lila said she was going down to look for something. So it was very business-like, but very nice people associated with it. I think there were two women on the board [of governors] and the rest were all men--business men and lawyers and men who were active in various things in the community.
- J: I notice that because of the old-fashioned laws before World War II that for awhile you lost your citizenship.
- W: Yes.
- J: My, that was something.
- W: My husband traveled with a British passport because England controlled India--governed India. And then there was a quota in this country on the number of people from various countries--Asian countries. They were here but because of the quota system the citizenship was taken away from those who had it; they didn't have to leave. But

when he [Mr. Watumull] lost his citizenship, I lost mine.

J: Again?

W: No, not again. .

J: Oh, that's the one time. Oh yes.

W: No, no, not again. That's the time I lost it.

J: Oh, okay. I see.

W: And of course, years later I went to court and became a citizen and swore allegiance. (chuckles)

J: Naturalized, in other words.

W: Yes!

J: And here you were born in America!

W: I was born in America, yes. (laughter)

J: Oh, I think that's fascinating. Did you have to take one of those courses that teach who was the first president and all that? (laughs)

W: No, but of course you learn that through your reading and you know it. The strange thing is that they didn't ask any of those questions, but the League of Women Voters who had in their way worked for this thing, that American women should not lose their citizenship under any circumstances, were a little angry because we hadn't asked them. Now, it never occurred to me to ask them because I was entirely separate from the organization.

J: Um hm.

W: Mrs. Y.C. Yang--now you may not remember that Yang name. He became ambassador from Korea to Washington. Their daughter was there [being naturalized]. Now I think he has passed away, because I haven't kept in contact with him.

J: I was wondering--you and Mr. Watumull got married in Redwood City, California.

W: Yes, (laughs) because I wanted to go home, but my parents did not like the idea of making it sort of an international marriage, so we went to Redwood City and we were married there. We had a friend who had been not exactly an

official but a top engineer or something with Matson Navigation Company. And when we went to the office in San Francisco they said to my husband, "Where are your papers to prove you're a high caste?" He said, "They're in my desk in Honolulu." Never thought that was going to enter into the picture. And a clerk said, "Well you can't marry an American girl." He wasn't dark, not even as dark as that (indicating a color in the room).

J: Yes, I remember him.

W: But "You can not marry an American girl unless you can prove you're a high caste." So this Mr. Harris said, "Well, I know a minister in Redwood City who will marry you. Let's go down there and try." Because a lawyer had recommended that we do that. So we went down to Redwood City and went to the courthouse and the young lady who waited on us never asked a question and said, "You have your license to get married." So we went to a minister who Mr. Harris knew and the minister was out, I think, calling on some of his flock, but his son was there and he said, "I'll take my bicycle and find him." (laughs) So he went out and his father was back in a little while and then we were married.

J: Oh, marvelous. Really.

W: Yes.

J: But did your family feel better later on?

W: Oh yes, uh huh, but I didn't go back. I felt--I had much communication with them.

J: But then your sister came out here too, didn't she?

W: Oh, my sister came here. Elsie [Jensen] Das. She was Elsie Jensen and she met a young Indian, Kumar Das, and they fell in love and they got married.

J: Marvelous.

W: Um hm. He did wonderful research for HSPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association] on different kinds of sugar that, you know, is extracted from it [sugar cane].

J: Oh yes, um hm.

W: One day--I think it [the substance] was in a flask or something--it burst and hit his jugular vein and killed him. It was terrible.

J: Oh, I should say. Tragic.

W: So . . .

J: When was the first time you visited India? About [when]? It must have been before World War II, I imagine, because you were married--what?--in 1922.

W: I don't know, but one night I got a call about four o'clock in the morning and my daughter, Lila, had gone out there and had set up Asia Shop, making things out of Indian textiles and Indian furniture and so on mainly for the different embassy women who lived out there. They were good patrons. Oh, let me see now. Where am I? So that was my daughter, Lila. [The shop was named Rangoli.]

J: Yes, and then . . .

W: Oh, then we got a call one morning about 4:00 a.m. and it was Lila on the phone and she said, "I'm going to get married and I'd like you to come out for the wedding." So my husband said, "Why don't they elope?" (laughter) He didn't want to go out for the wedding. Of course we went subsequent times and . . .

J: Did she elope?

W: No. We did go out later and the ceremony took place in a garden of some friends of ours with a canopy over the whole thing and we went up on the sort of platform and there was a fire in a brazier. So we sat down on this platform and I think my husband had bribed the priest not to make it too long. (laughter) An awful thing to do. And then there were various things. There was a fire of mango wood in this brazier and there were certain times when the groom had to lead the bride around this platform. Oh, it had strings of pikake leis all around this little platform and the cover, and the groom would lead her and that would indicate that in aspects of their life he was the one who made the decisions. But then she also went around and that indicated that she also had certain rights in marriage.

J: Oh, how nice.

W: Uh huh. So that was that.

J: You know, I was noticing that Mr. Watumull established your [Watumull] Foundation in 1942.

W: Yes.

J: Right in the midst of the war.

W: Well, you see, we were in the war in a certain way. We had had word that we were to go down into Pearl Harbor and meet the Clipper because it contained some relative of Mahatma Gandhi's and when we got down there, there wasn't any sign and he said the plane was due about 12:00 or 12:30 p.m. and to come back then. So we drove home.

We had quite a large, Colonial-styled house on Keeau-moku and Dominis streets and we just said, "We'll have our breakfast." We always ate on the lanai overlooking the garden of our neighbors which was down below. We were higher up. We were on the lanai and breakfast was about ready to eat and our neighbors down below called up to us and said that they had had word that Pearl Harbor was being bombarded and Dr. Gordon had been asked to come down to the hospital, as so many of the doctors had to go. They were called.

They operated from that day, all night, into the next day but a very fortunate thing happened. There was a man who had been asked to come over here and speak to a meeting of all the doctors. And it seemed that he had the only instrument--he was talking about traumatic surgery--that would locate schrapnel in the body so they didn't have to probe for it and cut the patients all up and they were able, with a slight cut, to remove this.

So we went up on our lanai and thought we'd have our breakfast and in a little while our maid's husband came in from Bellows Field, shaking like anything, and he said that the field had been bombarded and they just had to get under trucks or anything they could, and then he some way managed to get in. Well, the maid we had was Japanese and she said she should go home with her husband. Nobody knew what was going to happen.

So my husband thought he'd get shaved anyway so he went up into our large bathroom that was all marble-tiled wall, maybe five feet high or something, and there was a round mirror, maybe about thirty inches or so, that rested on the top of this wainscotting. While he was shaving, because my younger daughter had said that we had to do something, schrapnel came through in that little space between the mirror and this marble wainscotting and flew right past his face, hit the wall in back, ricocheted, and went through the screen window not too far from where he was shaving.

J: Oh my heavens.

W: On the way back from Pearl Harbor--I'm going back a little bit--we saw only one plane up in the sky and it wasn't a military plane at all. We learned afterwards it was Mr.

[Roy A.] Vitousek. He liked to fly. (chuckles) But if we had been fifteen minutes later on that Pearl Harbor road, they say we would have been bombarded too. Our only thought was to get home.

J: You know that fragment, was that from our own [bomb]? I mean, how did that come to your house? It wasn't one that the Japanese dropped.

W: Well, it fell in the block below our house . . .

J: Oh.

W: . . . and the piece fragmented.

J: Just flew. And was it a Japanese bomb?

W: Well, I don't know.

J: Probably.

W: Yes, most probably. Or it could have been one of ours that was trying to. . . .

J: My heavens.

W: So, let me see.

J: Did that plane ever come in with the relative of Mahatma Gandhi's?

W: There was a ship that came in about the same time. I think at that time it was called the Dollar Steamship Company, but I think now it's the President Line or something of that sort. The captain had called everybody together and had told them that it seemed there was an undeclared war between Hawaii and the United States. (laughter) So, because we had a large house, the next morning I got a call from the Army and was asked if we could take in two women from the post and two children and so we said, "Yes." And we also got a call from the steamship company saying that they had two men passengers who had been undergoing police training in the United States and could we take them in.

Well, my sister [Elsie Jensen Das] had her house below ours in the garden but not on the same side as the Gordons. We decided that we'd put the men in that house, and the women and the children would stay in our house. Fortunately we had one of the few things under our house--it was a basement--and that first night, we sat in that basement and had gathered our neighbors in (laughter) and

so we perhaps felt a little more secure.

But at one time I realized that if I was going to have these people, I'd have to feed them so I went to the market. It was called Capitol Market and it was down--streets have changed so much--not on Kalakaua Avenue but maybe Beretania Street someplace.

J: Yes, that sounds familiar.

W: The boys in the market, because I did all my marketing there, gave me a gunny sack and I went up and down the aisles, picking whatever I could more or less lay my hands on and put in this big gunny sack. And then, the best thing of all was--you see, the butchers knew me too so they sold me a considerable amount of meat, so I had meat and things to give them.

J: Mm, isn't that wonderful. Fantastic.

W: A few days later, these Army women were able to get food from the commissary and brought that in and of course then we were all right.

But I remember that some of our soldiers were stationed at, I think it must have been, Roosevelt High School which wasn't too far [away] and it was before all of this took place; but one of the boys said, "I saw them unloading a lot of coffins from the ship"--this was long before the war ever began--"and I wondered if I might be in one of those someday."

J: Oh my.

W: Terrible, you know, when you think about it.

J: Yes. Yes. Would you like to pause for a little bit? (recorder turned off and on again) What I was wondering was, what was your first impression of India the first time you saw it?

W: Oh, that would be very hard to say. (laughs) Fascinating country.

J: You became so involved in so much of India's . . .

W: Yes, later. But you see, in 1942 my husband started this foundation and because he wasn't terribly well, they wanted us to go to the Mainland. He felt that he wanted to do something for his country and he started the [Watumull] Foundation in 1942. But then, as I say, we went to the Mainland because he wasn't terribly well and his nephew was able to look after the business. He was here [in Ha-

waii] and my husband had trained him, so we went up to Los Angeles and rented a house and we discovered, really ourselves, what was wrong with him. He was protein deficient because, while he wasn't an orthodox Hindu at all, they weren't particularly inclined to eat meat and especially no beef. He thought that eggs had not agreed with him. But there was a very fine doctor in Los Angeles, a man by the name of George Star White, and we both went to him for treatments because he had very modern ways and he told him to go ahead and eat those things and then he was really all right. So we were glad, of course, when he fully recovered.

J: How long did you stay in Los Angeles?

W: Oh, we stayed a long time because we opened an office to buy for our business [the East India Store] here in Honolulu. Then he became interested in the committee called the National Committee for India's Freedom. He would go to New York, and Washington, D.C. particularly, to try to set up a climate in this country favorable to India's freedom. And I remember one night I went with him to a meeting in a very famous hall in Washington.

J: Constitution [Hall]? Let's see.

W: I think it had a woman's name attached to it.

J: Oh yes. I'll think of it.

W: And with us was sitting--and we were sitting down in the front row of this auditorium because I have a little hearing problem--Dr. Anup Singh, who was the secretary of this National Committee for India's Freedom, and he sat with his hand in his pocket. The British ambassador was speaking and he never took his eyes off Dr. Anup Singh. Didn't know whether he might have a gun or not.

J: Oh my heavens.

W: Well, I mean that's all we could assume because he watched him. Was it Constitution Hall? Daughters of the American Revolution.

J: Oh yes.

W: Did they have a hall?

J: Yes, they did. They had one of the only halls until later on.

- W: It was a very nice auditorium and they were there.
- J: Was Dr. Singh very prominent in the India Freedom Movement?
- W: Yes, because there were a few Indians who had lectured in American universities in New York for our foundation and Dr. Anup Singh was one of them. And then there was a very fine Indian, Dr. Taraknath Das. Dr. Das's wife, I think, belonged to the Daughters of the American Revolution and she said, "Nobody's ever going to take my citizenship away from me." But they're both dead now but the foundation is in existence and once a year they have a meeting to distribute money--that still lies with that foundation--to some worthy student or worthy cause.
- J: Um hm. Interesting. Well then, your husband felt that he'd done a great deal to advance India's cause.
- W: Um hm. He did feel that. Of course we came back here and it was busy with the business and we built this house [at 2139 Puuualii Place]. We had been playing bridge with some friends the night before [his final illness]. He had had some angina, because we had been in London, we had been in Paris and we'd gone to Rome and seen the Vatican things. And when we were in London he said that he felt a little pain, so he had some digitalis to take.
- And so, as I say, we were at home and the night before, we'd played bridge with these friends. And then he had to go to the hospital. The doctor told him he should be hospitalized. Fortunately I was able to get a room in the hospital right next to his. My daughters would bring up salt-free food for him to eat and things of that sort. And they had come in the morning, this particular morning, and he'd been in an oxygen tent. The children and I were talking. The nurse came in and said, "Your husband is passing away." So of course we were right there but there was nothing that could be done.
- J: Um hm. A marvelous man and a marvelous life. As you got more involved in India's future, I notice that you got very active in the Planned Parenthood.
- W: Oh yes! My wonderful friend, Margaret Sanger.
- J: Really?
- W: Um hm. That's her picture up there.
- J: Oh yes.

- W: She was in Santa Barbara and I had gone up. Oh, had I gone up from Los Angeles? Yes, I'd gone up. We decided that we should hold a Planned Parenthood conference in India. In the meantime, I had helped her raise money and things, you see. If we were going to India, I mean, we had to raise money for the cause.
- J: You'd visited her.
- W: So we flew out to India, and a stranger in India had to register with the police in Old Delhi and you got certain documents and wherever you went you got that sign so they knew where you were and they could look after you better. So the policeman, the first one--we talked to a handsome Sikh with a turban and a beard--says, "Madam, what brings you to India?" And I said, "Well, I'm going to the birth control conference in Bombay." "That," he said, "is what my country needs! Can I ride over to New Delhi with you?" So I said, "Of course you can." And on the way over I said, "How many children do you have?" "I have two." He said, "They're girls." And I said, "Don't you want a son?" (laughs) And he said, "Nowadays it doesn't make any difference."
- J: Imagine.
- W: Yes, imagine that. So we went to Bombay where the conference was being held because we had gotten permission, you see, from Lady Rama Rau that the conference could be held there. So we sat on the platform. Margaret Sanger sat on the platform. [Mrs. Dhanvanthi Rama Rau]
- J: You said Lady Someone gave you permission?
- W: Lady Rama. R-A-M-A R-A-U. It's capital R of course. Rama Rau, a very handsome woman.
- J: Was she an official?
- W: Pardon me?
- J: Was she an official of the government?
- W: No, no. She was interested in Planned Parenthood.
- J: Ah, I see. So she was part of that in India. Yes.
- W: Um hm. Margaret made a speech and at that conference they organized the first International Planned Parenthood Organization for the world.

J: Oh. Exciting, isn't it?

W: Yes. That Planned Parenthood Organization in Bombay occasionally sends me a publication but I don't know any of those people there. They're all gone.

I talked one day--I think that was in Delhi--to a woman who was then Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur. That was her name. Raj Kumari actually means "a title" but this was her given name. I asked her if she weren't interested in Planned Parenthood. No, she wasn't, but I said, "What about the pill and other things?" I said, "There's a doctor in England who's had great success with the pill." I've forgotten that doctor's name. "He's had seventy-five patients." She said, "When he has seventy-five thousand I will listen to him but not before." (laughs) So I didn't get very far with her.

J: One of your Watumull scholars was the first Minister, wasn't he, of the Family Planning in India? Dr. S. Chandrasekhar? [Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar]

W: Chandra- what?

J: C-H-A-N-D-R-A-S-A-K-H-A-R [sic].

W: Chandrasekhar?

J: Yes.

W: Dr. Chandrasekhar was a demographer. He was here with his wife a few months ago and they stayed with Lila.

J: Oh, how nice.

W: Then there was another one, Dr. Chandrasekaran, but he doesn't play any part in any of this that I've been relating to you. [Dr. C. Chandrasekaran, Family Planning]

J: I notice you have a painting of Gandhi.

W: Oh, I must tell you about that. I was in New York one time--it was after my husband had passed away--and I had a friend there who was very interested in art and she said, "I'd like you to go up to his studio with me." So I went up and looked about the room but I came back, looking at this picture, knowing that it was Gandhi. So he said, "You like that painting, don't you?" And I said, "Yes, very much." "Well," he said, "you can have it for three hundred dollars." I had also, from that same man, gotten the Buddha Satva that is on the pedestal in the hall.

Sometime much later, I had whatever art objects I had

in the house appraised. And you know what appraisal they put on it, that painting? Six thousand dollars.

J: Oh my heavens. It's a beautiful painting.

W: It was painted by--by his name, he must have been a Persian--Khachaturian [a Russian name].

J: Oh, um hm.

W: I've been very fond of that and the Buddha Satva too. Very peaceful and it's just in the position of restfulness and serenity.

J: I think this is enough for today, Mrs. Watumull.

W: I think so.

END OF SIDE 1/3RD TAPE

END OF SECOND INTERVIEW

NOTE: SIDE 2/3RD TAPE is unused. The next two interviews are on the fourth tape.

BEGINNING OF THIRD INTERVIEW

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/4TH TAPE

At her Makiki home, 2139 Puualii Place, Honolulu 96822

February 21, 1979

W: Ellen Jensen Watumull

A: Kathy Allen, Interviewer

A: Today I'd like you to tell me about Margaret Sanger; your associations and your relationships with her; about any work you did together; and about the woman herself, the kind of person she was. [Margaret Sanger, 1883-1966, American founder of the birth control movement]

W: It was many, many years ago; in fact, so long ago that I don't remember really when I first met Margaret Sanger. It was in California, and my husband and I had both been interested in family planning, especially for India where it seemed urgent that people should know something about it and how they might possibly limit the size of a family.

I remember--this again of course meant when I first knew her--going up to a little Danish settlement called Solvang in California. That happened to be almost an exclusively Danish community and my background, my parents were Danish. We looked around the place in Solvang. There were storks on the roofs and of course Mrs. Sanger remarked that it meant perhaps, or was a symbol of, producing more babies. We didn't dwell on that very long. I remember we did one thing. We went into a Danish bakery and we bought very nice--it wasn't a muffin, it wasn't a cake, but these were sort of flat sweet things called Shoe Soles. (laughter)

A: Shoe Soles? All right.

W: When we returned to Los Angeles, we began to think of holding an International Planned Parenthood conference in Bombay. Of course no one could go to Bombay and say, "We've come here to hold a conference," so it was necessary to secure the approval and an invitation from a remarkable Indian lady called Lady Rama Rau.

A: Would you please spell that for me. Would you please spell that name.

W: Yes. Capital R-A-M-A, capital R-A-U. Rama Rau. In due time the invitation came and we started out by air for Bombay. On the way we stopped in Hong Kong and met the local Family Planning Association--or rather, an association that was beginning to feel the necessity for family planning--and of course the ones we were most concerned with were the poor people because they had large families.

When we got to India, a foreigner has to register with the police in Old Delhi in order to obtain certain forms that had to be checked at any place where you may stop. There was a very handsome Sikh in the police office in Delhi.

A: A handsome what?

W: A very handsome Sikh. S-I-K-H.

A: Thank you.

W: When he was giving me the papers he said, "Madam, what brings you to India?" And I said, "Well, we're going to have a birth-control Family Planning conference in Bombay. His eyes brightened and he pounded on the table and he said, "That is what my country needs! Are you going to drive over to New Delhi?" I said, "Yes." He said, "May I drive with you?" So in the course of conversation I asked him how many children he had. He said, "Two girls." And I said, "Don't you want any sons?" "Nowadays," he replied, "it makes no difference."

So we flew to Bombay and were met by a delegation of very charming women who took us to our hotel. And then we received the details of where the meeting was going to be held. I have forgotten the building frankly.

A: The building?

W: The name of the building . . .

A: It doesn't matter.

W: . . . where we met. And then we met [Jawaharlal] Nehru, [the first Prime Minister of India], just in passing. Then we went to the meeting hall where the conference began.

A: What was your impression of Nehru?

W: The impression of Nehru at that time was more or less in

passing because he was not participating in any way in the conference, but the person who did was Dr. Radha Krishan. (she spells his name) He gave an address of welcome. Fortunately I was privileged to sit on the platform not far from Mrs. Sanger, because naturally everyone had come to hear her, not the lesser lights.

A: Not the lesser what?

W: Not the lesser lights. (chuckles) Oh dear, now my memory.

A: Turn it off, then. (she is holding the microphone with the on-off control) Turn it off. That's it. (recorder turned off and on again)

W: Margaret Sanger was a charming person, very feminine, very gentle but firm. Her motto really was: every child a wanted child. And from then on, the conference proceeded with many speakers, for or against. There was a Catholic nun who opposed anything having to do with family limitation.

Margaret Sanger had visited in Honolulu before I ever knew her and she had traveled with her husband, Mr. Slee. S-L-E-E.

A: Do you know his first name?

W: Noah. N-O-A-H. Noah Slee. I asked her if there was something she would especially like to do while she was in Honolulu. So she said, "We've been here many times." Of course by that time Mr. Slee had passed away. And she said, "Yes, I've been here many times and I would like to have a luau. Go to a luau." So we arranged a luau for her at, I think, the Kamehameha School Alumni Association building. I've forgotten the street, Miss Allen.

A: That's all right.

W: And knowing that she liked, you know, to have a drink, we had arranged for that and when she tasted it she said, "My goodness, this has no taste!" And she went over and got some liquor and poured it into the bowl and enjoyed her evening very, very much. (laughter) Now that's about all I remember.

A: All right. Do you want to turn it off? (recorder turned off and on again)

W: When Margaret was in Honolulu, she stayed with us in the Magoon home on Diamond Head Road.

A: Is that where you were living at the time?

W: Which we had rented at that time. (recorder turned off and on again and she is asked to record what we spoke of while it was off)

A: Okay.

W: I am very fortunate in having a picture of Margaret Sanger taken, as I said, in Altadena or in one of the foothills of the mountains there. She's holding a bunch of grapes in her hands and admiring the beauty and the color of them.

I'm very fortunate to have a copy of a book by Bill [William] Davenport whose wife painted my husband's portrait.

A: His wife's name was . . .

W: His wife's name is Roselle Davenport. R-O-S-E-L-L-E and then Davenport.

A: Which she [Mrs. Watumull] has on her living room wall--the portrait, that is.

W: Yes, which I have on my living room wall. She had cancer and went to Europe to have treatment for it and evidently recovered completely because she has had exhibitions of her paintings in this country at different times over a period of time. She and her husband continued to live in Europe and he became headmaster of a very fine school there and carried out many of his ideas of what education should be. (recorder turned off and on again)

A: Would you tell about Gyro which he has inscribed.

W: My daughter, Lila, gave me the copy of Gyro which I treasure very much. It's the story of the life and times of Lawrence Sperry and of course it was written by William Wyatt Davenport.

A: Would you like to read the inscription, please?

W: I would like to read the inscription: For Ellen Watumull, with fond aloha, Bill Davenport.

A: It's marvelous to have that inscribed book. Do you want to turn it [the recorder] off for a moment? (recorder turned off and on again)

I'd like to ask you about the first person from India to come to Hawaii to establish his or her home. Who was

the first Indian from India, as distinguished from the Indian from America, who came to Hawaii to establish his home?

W: As far as I know, my husband was the first person from India to come to Hawaii, which was in . . . (long pause)

A: Nineteen seventeen?

W: Maybe in the . . .

A: During World War I? Had your husband's brother [Jhamandas Watumull] preceded him to Hawaii [in 1916]?

W: Yes. My husband's brother had preceded him, because the brother had a business in Manila, and an old partner [Rochiram Dharandas] had come to Hawaii [enroute to San Francisco in 1913] and was so enamoured of the freedom here that he paid a great deal of attention to the young women. In fact he gave one a piano. So the Chinese woman who worked for them [in the East India Store established in 1913] wrote to my brother-in-law in Manila and said, "If you want to save your business, I think you'd better come over here," which he did.

A: What is this brother's name, Mrs. Watumull?

W: He is Mr. Jhamandas Watumull and in fact is still alive today, although six years older than my husband.

A: Then he was the first one to come, is that correct? [The first Indian to come to Hawaii was actually Rochiram Dharandas.]

W: Well, since my brother-in-law wanted to go back to Manila, he cabled my husband to come to Honolulu and take over. At the time my brother-in-law, Jhamandas Watumull, came to Hawaii there was no Indian community. In fact, my husband was the only Indian here for quite some time [because the two partners returned to Manila].

A: Did your husband have anything to do with the development of the Indian community in Hawaii?

W: No. My husband was not instrumental in developing an Indian community in Hawaii because we then were subsequently married [in 1922] and my children were born here and went to school here. The Indian community here now in 1979 is mainly located at the University of Hawaii. A few weeks ago the ambassador of India in Washington, D.C. spoke at the university's John Burns Building.

After quite a number of years, my husband went to Washington, D.C. and I went with him, the object being to try to create a climate in Washington conducive to India's freedom [from British rule]. There were many meetings. There was an organization in New York called the India League of America. And I remember going to a meeting with my husband and an Indian who was an American citizen and had lectured for us [the Watumull Foundation] in a university in New York. This man, Dr. Anup Singh. My husband and I sat in the front row and the speaker was the British ambassador to the United States. Dr. Anup Singh sat with his hand in his righthand pocket and the ambassador never took his eyes off Dr. Anup Singh, not knowing whether he might possibly have a gun in his pocket, which he did not have.

A: I'd like to ask you about what I consider a problem in India, Mrs. Watumull. First of all I'll ask, are cows still considered sacred in India? [If so, a problem because of famine there.]

W: It's been a long time since I've been in India but undoubtedly in some places the cow is considered sacred because, you see, it was a source of milk. 'Almost every Indian household makes its own form of yogurt. (chuckles) I think they call it dehi. D-E-H-I. What they will eat in the course of a day--yogurt, dehi--but save over enough for the starter on the next day.

A: The mother. That's called the mother.

W: Yes, it's called the mother. (recorder turned off and on again after a brief rest period)

A: Would you start from the beginning of that. We should be putting that on tape.

W: One time when I was visiting my daughter Lila in India, I had read a book written by a judge of the high court in Madras [Justice M. Anantanarayanan] called The Silver Pilgrimage. It was concerned with a young man in Ceylon whose father and tutor were concerned because this young man was indifferent, more or less, to life around him. If a wife died--and he had several--it had no emotional impact on him. When people were poverty-stricken, he was not a bit concerned. So his father and his tutor decided that the young man should go on a Silver Pilgrimage to India, and in the course of his travels he became aware for the first time that there were poor people. He fell in love with a gypsy princess and when she became ill he realized what it meant to truly love somebody. And when his jour-

ney was ended, almost at the Himalaya Mountains, it was time for him to return, but he had learned so much. If you take a Silver Pilgrimage, you can be reincarnated; but if you go on a Golden Pilgrimage, you are then ready for heaven.

I had written to Alan Hovhaness [internationally known composer] asking him . . .

END OF SIDE 1/4TH TAPE

. . . if he would consider making a suite of music--in the meantime of course I had sent him the book--called "The Silver Pilgrimage." And he wrote back and said, "Not only will I compose a suite of music, but I will make it one of my major works and it will be a symphony." And of course its name is "The Silver Pilgrimage." The symphony has been recorded by the Louisville Society of Modern Music [played by the Louisville Kentucky Symphony Orchestra] but I do not know where it is available. However, our foundation had sent the symphony to various colleges and universities for their music departments.

A: Do you not have a copy of it here?

W: No, I don't. The symphony was wanted by the New York Symphony for its premiere there, but it had been promised that it would have its premiere in Honolulu [in 1964].

There are several movements in the symphony. The first movement symbolized the flowing of the River Ganges. The violinist felt that it did not show off their musical ability because it gave them so little to do except in this very soft tone. There are three more movements to the symphony which gave the musicians and the orchestra much more opportunity to display their abilities as a group.

COUNTER AT 45/SIDE 2/4TH TAPE

END OF THIRD INTERVIEW

NOTE: The following fourth interview begins on this fourth tape where the third interview ended.

BEGINNING OF FOURTH INTERVIEW

COUNTER AT 45/SIDE 2/4TH TAPE

At her Makiki home, 2139 Puualii Place, Honolulu 96822

March 1, 1979

W: Ellen Jensen Watumull

A: Kathy Allen, Interviewer

A: Mrs. Watumull, I would like to have you tell me today about the life and times of G.J. Watumull: reminiscences, experiences and incidents that represented milestones, anecdotes, characteristics and personality of this man who was a leader in our community and an international leader. Now I turn this [microphone] over to you.

W: Although my husband was always known as G.J. Watumull or, as his friends always called him, G.J., his name given to him in India was Gobindram Jhamandas Watumull. (on request she spells his name) His name, Gobindram, was the name that was given to him at birth. Jhamandas was a family name and Watumull was a name that he acquired when he came to this country because his older brother was named Watumull and people couldn't understand why one was Mr. Watumull and one was Mr. Gobindram. (laughs) So it was legally changed.

As his wife, I called him Goma. G-O-M-A. His personal expression was an outgoing, warm one that took in everyone. He never felt that anyone was beneath him or above him, but a friend and someone undoubtedly from whom he could learn.

We did not travel extensively together, although we had done some of that too. We had been in China. I went once by myself, purchasing things for our business which was on Fort Street and at that time called the East India Store. We purchased antiques. We purchased beautiful hand-embroidered linens, beautiful hand-embroidered lingerie, hand-carved chests, teakwood chests and, believe it or not, Spanish shawls made in India.

He was a wonderful father and loved his children and always wanted the best for them, not in the way of material things because he believed very much as Gandhi did that non-possession is far better than material display of

any kind.

He was always greatly concerned about his employees. Because he was, they always worked for him so willingly, so happily, and gave him of their best too, which made for a wonderful exchange between employer and employee. Minnie Saiki, who has worked for our business even though it has changed to a large extent--no longer dealing in merchandise but in property, land, and so on--has never worked for any other employer except for him. In fact, she's been an employee for forty-two years and the other employees always remember that particular [anniversary] day and they have a little party.

Unfortunately I was not in Honolulu when he went to the court and became an American citizen. It is customary, when people become citizens, that they not only are asked many questions but those who are becoming citizens do a great deal of hard studying. Of course my husband was an avid reader and whatever they might have asked him, he would have been able to answer.

I was on the Mainland with two of the children, seeing that they were entered in schools that would give them an opportunity to develop themselves and where they would work at their best. The day my husband became a citizen, he telephoned me in Los Angeles and said, "This is Citizen Watumull speaking. Of course I wept but it was out of joy.

My older daughter, Mrs. [Lila Watumull] Sahney, was present at the time and instead of having interviews with the paper, they went into the judge's chambers and had a reception with leis and--I don't remember if they had anything to drink, but my husband never drank and so I think they didn't have any libations. (laughter)

My husband and I belonged to a little church group at Central Union Church and all of our friends there, although they were churchgoers, smoked. My husband and I discussed it and thought that perhaps we should try to smoke, in the event that the others would think that we were not quite part of them. So we tried and we simply could not stand it because the smell of the cigarette would be on your fingers, in your hair, in your clothes. So that was the last of any smoking we ever did.

A: Would you please tell about the inception, growth, and expansion of the Watumull Foundation. What procedure and problems were involved in establishing the foundation, especially from a personal point of view; and at what point did Mr. Watumull get the idea for the Watumull Foundation and what particular situation or incident inspired that idea? Mainly, what started it?

W: Just before we left for the Mainland after World War II

began, my husband felt that he should do something for others and for the family and decided to set up a foundation. Of course a foundation involves legal aspects and papers and all kinds of things, and he consulted the best attorney that he could obtain and they prepared the plan. Of course since then the foundation has changed its direction and . . .

A: From what to what direction?

W: . . . subsequently I had an office in which I did foundation work in Waikiki, and each afternoon when I would get through I would drive close to my husband's business at that time [Watumull Investment Company], which had taken an interest in land and property, and we would go home.

At that time, of course, household help was not difficult to get so I didn't have to worry about preparing the dinner and all the details that cooking involves. My husband never enjoyed driving and consequently I did all of the driving, not because I was in any way a better driver but he just did not like it. So for a few years before his death I did all the driving.

A: Where was the Watumull Investment Company located at first, when Mr. Watumull first started that company? Where was that located?

W: It was located in what was known as the Royal Block on Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki [2207 Kalakaua Avenue, adjoining the mauka grounds of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel]. The business that we had--in fact a very lovely store on Fort Street across from the Catholic [Our Lady of Peace] Cathedral--was sold and my husband moved the offices to Waikiki and after that engaged in property and real estate.

A: Do you recall what year that was?

W: Oh dear, I don't recall. [1956]

A: It's all right.

W: Years afterwards, I was asked to be Honorary Consul for India and had the same office in which my husband had had his office years previously.

A: It's rather unusual for a woman to be asked to be Consul for India. How did that come about, Mrs. Watumull?

W: Since India had no representative in any way, I was asked I think, if I recall properly, by the embassy of India in Washington, D.C. My duties were in no way official, I was

not paid, I was not asked to do any extensive entertaining, although when visitors from India would come through we would naturally entertain them to some extent. But when Americans wanted visas to go to India, all of that official involvement had to be taken care of by the Consul General's office in San Francisco.

A: Now I'd like to talk about flouridation in Hawaii. What part did you play in that issue, which was quite strongly discussed during the late 1960's or the latter half of the 1960's?

W: There was an effort at about that time to flouridate the public water supplies and [it was thought] that flouridation would preserve the teeth of the children. This was a fallacy because if a family would put a flouride tablet in a quart of water, that would be sufficient for a family with children to protect their teeth for one day but it had to be done day after day.

I had read a great deal about the subject and was interested and collected a great deal of material pertaining to flouridation. Although I had no connection with this case, I did have a clipping, which came to me through a friend, of a little boy in British Columbia who at the age of three became very ill and his teeth became rotten. He went to the dentist and the dentist said, "Well, he needs flouride." And the father said, "He's had flouride ever since he was born." And the child subsequently died.

Also, much had been written about "Texas teeth." One form of flourosis is the mottling of the teeth. They found out in Texas that although there was some mottling, the people there had good strong teeth, and it was from that fact that much of the propaganda for flouridation began.

Promoters of flouridation wanted to promote this practice [of flouridating the public water supply] on the Island of Hawaii and on one occasion I was asked to go over and speak about this. I remember that after the meeting one man from another part of the island came to me and said, "Look at my teeth; they're perfect teeth. We have no flouridation," and he said, "We eat the proper food which will prevent food decay."

About two years ago there was an effort again to promote flouridation on Hawaii, particularly in Hilo, but my son David got a health food store over there to talk about the dangers of flouridation and so on, and the idea of promoting flouridation over there was given up; we hope given up for all time to come, as we do not have flouridation either in Honolulu.

A: Would you like to tell about the Hanahauoli School music

program as you found it and as you developed it? What was the music program in the twenties, when you came there, like?

W: In fact, there was no music in Hanahauoli School. By the way, Hanahauoli means "the school of joyful work" and the children were taught in such a way that they enjoyed their work and did not feel it a great bore. I was the first music teacher, as I said, and I got the children to make up little songs of their own, words and the melody; and we also had a rhythm band of simple instruments, like marimbas and rattles and small drums and things of that sort. Occasionally I would find a youngster who seemed not to be able to get things on pitch and so I would work with those individual children and get them, when I would give the tone, to hear that tone mentally; and when they could hear it mentally, their sense of tone improved greatly.

A: How many years did you teach at Hanahauoli School and, when you left, what was your reason for leaving?

W: When I left, my reason for leaving after two years was to get married. (chuckles)

A: Do you have anything particular to say in regard to the real estate values in Hawaii, shop rentals and the changing face of downtown Honolulu, the shift to Kapiolani Boulevard and to Waikiki of old established businesses?

W: I remember that the first house we built in Manoa Valley cost us about three thousand dollars and of course since that time real estate values have multiplied and multiplied. I remember that the people who bought our first home sold it for \$11,000 and they thought they had gotten a good profit. But when I read the Sunday newspapers with their pages and pages of real estate advertisements--I saw one the other day listed up in the \$900,000's. In fact, my neighbor who lives across the street from me not long ago had his house up for \$435,000. (chuckles) But he hasn't sold his home, so perhaps not everyone is in the market for what they think is a highly over-priced piece of real estate.

A: Would you comment on the [Honolulu] Academy of Arts and any particular way in which you have seen changes there?

W: Of course the Honolulu Academy of Arts is one of the fine institutions of Honolulu. The exhibits change from time to time. One of the most recent times when I was there to see an exhibit, the exhibits were so modern that although the [Watumull] Foundation had expected to make a purchase,

because we have had an annual purchase prize at the art academy, adding one worthwhile painting or piece of sculpture to the permanent collection of the academy, my family and I decided that there wasn't a thing in this modern exhibition that we cared to purchase.

A: That's the end of the tape.

END OF SIDE 2/4TH TAPE

END OF FOURTH INTERVIEW

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

NOTE:

- p.12 Mrs. Kathryn E. Mundorff operated the American Optical Company on Fort Street.
- p.15 Auntie Elsie refers to Elsie Jensen (Mrs. Kumar) Das.
- p.19 The Watumulls' neighbors on Keeaumoku Street were the Dr. Maurice Gordon family, 1724 Keeaumoku Street.
- p.21 Dr. Bhagat Thind lost his citizenship because he would not shave his beard, according to Lila Watumull Sahney.
- p.24 Dr. John M. Whitney, a dentist, lived at 1325 Punahou Street.
- p. 45 Minnie Saiki's full name is Minnie Kudo (Mrs. Yasuyo Robert) Saiki.
- p. 46 The Watumull Investment Company, started in 1956, was first located in the Ala Koa Apartment-Hotel, 2443 Koa Avenue, and it was that office that Mrs. Watumull later occupied. The G.J. Watumulls' interest in the East India Store was sold in 1956.

BIODATA

- Born: June 26, 1897 in Portland, Oregon of Danish parents, Carl and Marie Christensen Jensen.
- Education: Public schools in Portland, Oregon
Reed College, 1914-17
Extensive private musical education
- 1/1/1920 Moved to Honolulu, Hawaii and taught music in Hanahauoli School; also taught music to private students for many years.
- 7/5/1922 Married Gobindram Jhamandas Watumull of Hyderabad, Sind, India in Redwood City, California. Mother of three children: Lila Ann (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney; David; and Radha Watumull Hoday. Grandmother of eight.
- 1923 Lost her American citizenship when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a decision declaring nationals of India ineligible to U.S. citizenship, resulting in the loss of U.S. citizenship by wives of Indians residing in the United States. As a result, she worked with the League of Women Voters of Hawaii and women of Asian parentage to have the Cable Act amended enabling American-born women, including those of foreign descent, to retain U.S. citizenship regardless of their husband's nationality. When the law was changed, she was the first woman to be naturalized in the Federal Court of Hawaii, May 5, 1931.
- 1942-76 When the Watumull Foundation was established in 1942 to promote better understanding between India and the United States, she became the chairman of the Distribution Committee and directed the award of scholarships, fellowships, travel grants, visiting professorships, et cetera, to Indians. She became its executive vice president in 1956. Many Watumull Foundation scholars have distinguished themselves; some have held offices of cabinet and union ministry ranks in the government of India; some have held United Nations' positions especially in the Food and Agriculture Organization, and a number hold positions of distinction in the United States as well as in other countries. In the late 1940's she served on committees for the University of California at Los Angeles that were concerned

with problems of foreign students of all races and nationalities; worked with the dean of the Foreign Students' office, with the University Religious Conference and with the International Students' Center, all concerned with housing, off-campus graduate student activities and student problems.

- 1943-47 Supported her husband in his work with the National Committee for India's Freedom with headquarters in Washington, D.C. The late Dr. Syud Hussain, later India's ambassador to Egypt, was chairman and the late Dr. Anup Singh, M.P., was the general secretary. She supported the bill introduced into the Congress of the United States re-enabling Indians to receive U.S. citizenship. Her husband was the first Indian to become naturalized under the new law in December 1946.
- 1945-63 Member of the board of directors of Meals for Millions Foundation in Los Angeles.
- 1945-70 Gave many lectures on India in California and Hawaii on the customs and costumes of India.
- 1950 Delegate from the American Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu Chapter, to an international conference held in Lucknow, sponsored jointly by the AIPR and the Indian Council of Foreign Affairs.
- 1952 Became associated with Margaret Sanger in the International Planned Parenthood Federation; planned, helped finance and supported the Third International Planned Parenthood Federation Conference held in Bombay in November 1952; became Mrs. Sanger's private administrative assistant in 1955 at the Fifth International Planned Parenthood Conference held in Tokyo, Japan; also worked in that capacity for and during the Sixth International Conference held in New Delhi in 1959; was a member of the Western Hemisphere Regional Council of the IPPF for three years; attended the International Conference of Social Workers held in Madras and participated in a four-day workshop on "Social Implications of the Population Problem."
- 1954 Led the fight in Hawaii in opposition to artificial fluoridation of its water supplies. Visited, in Patiala, the late Dr. Amarjit Singh and Dr. S. S. Jolly, professor of medicine at the Government Medical College in Patiala, and their colleagues

for information regarding endemic fluorosis.

- 1955-61 Vice chairman of the members' council of the Honolulu Chapter of World Brotherhood.
- 1955-59 First woman member of the board of governors of the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council. Received the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council citation for "Outstanding Contribution to United States-Asian Relations by a Citizen of Hawaii."
- 1957-61 Only woman member of a special committee that advised the establishment of the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii.
- 1960-66 Board member of Friends of the East-West Center.
- 1961 Chairman of the committee for the Tagore Centennial celebration in Hawaii.
- 1962-63 Arranged for the internationally-known composer, Alan Hovhaness, to compose a symphony based on The Silver Pilgrimage, a book by Justice M. Anantaramayan of Madras, India. The symphony had its world premiere in Honolulu in 1964 and shortly thereafter had its Mainland United States premiere in New York City under the great American conductor Leopold Stokowski. The symphony has been published and recorded by the Louisville Kentucky Symphony Orchestra.
- 1962 As executive vice president of the Watumull Foundation,
1965 presided over ceremonies held in New Delhi
1967 when the G.J. Watumull Memorial Awards and Distinguished Achievement Awards were presented to outstanding Indians and Americans who had contributed to world knowledge and to international understanding. Among the speakers at these functions have been Smt. Laxmi Menon, former Union Minister of External Affairs; former U.S. Ambassador to India Chester Bowles; Dr. Zakir Husain; Prime Minister Indira Gandhi; Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, at the time Union Minister for Health and Family Planning; former Chief Justice Vivian Bose and others.
- 1963-70 Committee member of the Foreign Students' Assistance Fund of the University of Hawaii.
- 1963-69 U.S. board member, Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital, India.

1964-72 Honorary Consul of India for Hawaii.

10/15/1966 Received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Western College for Women, Oxford, Ohio.

1967-69 Board member of Goodwill Industries of America, Honolulu Branch.

4/1968 General chairman of Flora Pacifica, an outstandingly beautiful annual event using plants growing in Hawaii of Pacific origin, showing their usefulness to man and presenting man's use of such plants in his everyday life, his art, his literature, his philosophy and religion. The 1968 show presented plants that had their origin in India and also handicrafts of India, particularly those made of wood. A large number of the artifacts were personally collected in India by Ellen Jensen Watumull and many items were from her personal collection.

1969 Chairman of the Gandhi Centenary Committee for Hawaii.

1939 In the field of art, she arranged an exhibit of paintings in the Watumull home by Prabhat Niyogi, the first exhibit held by an Indian artist in Hawaii.

1940 Promoted and arranged for renowned Indian dancer Ram Gopal's first three American performances which were given in Honolulu, Hawaii, all highly successful.

1959 Held an exhibit in her home of paintings by Krishna Kulkarni, at that time head of the Department of Art of Banaras Hindu University.

1959 to date Member of the American Association of University Women.

 Honorary life member of the Family Planning Association of Mysore State, India.

 Honorary life member and honorary international member of Beta Sigma Phi, international organization of women.

 Honorary member of Delta Kappa Gamma, international organization of women educators.

Honorary member of the International Women's Club
of Los Angeles for over twenty years.

Ellen Jensen Watumull's interest in Family Planning goes back to 1918 when, as a young woman of twenty in Portland, Oregon, she went to a lecture given by Margaret Sanger. As often happened to Mrs. Sanger in those times, during the course of the lecture she was arrested and taken off to the police station, but not before she had convinced at least Ellen Watumull of the necessity for Family Planning.

In 1951 Ellen Watumull and her husband, Gobindram Jhamandas Watumull, were active through the Watumull Foundation in helping India to promote her national efficiency. They felt the population problem in India to be of urgent concern and, thus, thought of the one person who could help. A phone call to Margaret Sanger, who at that time was in Tucson, Arizona, resulted in the Watumulls taking a plane from Los Angeles to Tucson where Mrs. Sanger decided then and there that the next International Planned Parenthood Conference would be held in Bombay.

Ellen Watumull, through the Watumull Foundation, worked with leaders in India to arrange the international meeting as well as help finance it, and the conference in Bombay was the nudge that began what was to become the largest Family Planning movement in the world. The Indian government, although aware of the problem, had not recognized it owing to reluctance on the part of the new country's leaders to go into the subject. It was by bringing Margaret Sanger to India with the conference that Ellen Watumull set the machinery in motion for the government of India becoming the first nation to recognize Family Planning on a government level and to allocate funds in their Five Year Plan for this purpose.

The Watumull Foundation subsequently enabled twenty Indian doctors to receive special training in Family Planning at the Margaret Sanger Research Institute in New York. India's first Minister for Family Planning was a Watumull scholar, Dr. S. Chandrasekhar. The Watumull Foundation has also given funds for birth-control research in India and provided contraceptives as well as books to Family Planning centers in India.

Subject Index

- 1 Family history: Watumull-Jensen
 Carl and Marie Christensen Jensen
 Gobindram Jhamandas Watumull
 Carl and Marie Jensen's employment
- 2 The Jensen family: Ewald, Ellen, Elsie
 Ellen Watumull's early interests, abilities
 The Jensen family's living arrangement
 Carl and Marie Christensen Jensen
 The Jensens' religious persuasion
 Ellen Watumull's bout with scarlet fever
 Ellen Watumull's education: Ladd School
- 3 Grace DeGraff, an inspiring teacher
 Henry Ford and Jane Adams
 Family history: Jensen
 Calvin Jensen; Ewald Jensen
 Jensen family's characteristics; talents
 Elsie Jensen (Mrs. Kumar) Das
 Ellen Watumull's musical ability
 Professor Calvin Cady, Columbia University
- 4 Calvin Jensen's birth and music education
 Portland's Music Education School
 Dr. John Dewey, educator
 Ellen Watumull's music collection; schooling
 Jensen family anecdotes: Calvin and Ewald

- 5 Ellen Watumull's education and teachers
Jefferson High School, Portland
Francis Bittner, mathematics teacher
Miss Sally Ruby, English teacher
Miss Gleason, Latin teacher
Anecdote: the Watumulls in Italy
Miss Alma Jonson, librarian
Anecdote: Ellen Watumull, librarian
- 6 Alma Jonson: a word portrait
Ellen Watumull's high school graduation
Carl and Marie Jensen's characteristics
Ellen Watumull's scholastic standing
Ellen Watumull's education: Reed College
- 7 Ellen Watumull's major interests
World War I; Grace DeGraff
Henry Ford and Jane Adams
Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin
Armistice Day in Portland
Ellen Watumull's employment: U.S. Army
Signal Corps, aviation section
Ellen Watumull's wartime salary
- 8 Ellen Watumull's musical ambition
The story of Ellen Watumull's accident
Elsie Jensen (Mrs. Kumar) Das

- 8 Ellen Watumull's move to Hawaii
 Clara McCullough, music teacher
 Geraldine Aitken, music teacher
 Professor Calvin Cady
- 9 Ellen Watumull's trip on the Lurline
 Ellen Watumull's employment, 1920
 Hanahauoli School
 Description of Honolulu, 1920
 Mrs. Clara Sutherland
 Hiram Bingham, I
- 10 Description of Honolulu's streetcar system
 Description of Waikiki, 1920
 Moana Hotel; Seaside Hotel
 Hilton Hawaiian Village
 Princess Kaiulani Hotel
 Duke Kahanamoku
 Ellen Watumull's first summer in Hawaii
 Geraldine Aitken
 The old Forbes home
- 11 Mrs. Clara Sutherland
 Geraldine Aitken
 Eureka and Frederick Blatchford Forbes
 Punahou School
 The Kamuela Camping Club

- 11 Anecdote: Ellen Watumull on Kauai, 1920
- 12 Ellen Jensen meets G.J. Watumull, 1920
 - Clara and Ida Ziegler's boardinghouse
 - McKinley High School
 - Description of boardinghouse life
 - Mrs. Kathryn E. Mundorff
 - East India Store on Fort Street
- 13 Story of the Watumulls' meeting
 - Ellen Watumull's employment: music teacher
 - Hanahauoli School
 - The Watumulls' first home in Manoa
 - Anecdote: G.J. Watumull's surgery
 - Lila Ann Watumull (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney
- 14 The Watumulls' early economic status
 - Ishii, the yardman
 - The Watumull family's life in Manoa
 - Dr. and Mrs. You Chan Yang
 - Watumull family history
 - East India Store's merchandise
- 15 Ellen Watumull's business responsibilities
 - Elsie Jensen Das's residence, Makiki
 - The Watumull children's birthplaces
 - Lila Ann Watumull (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney
 - David Watumull; Radha Watumull Homay

- 15 Kauikeolani and Kapiolani hospitals
The Watumulls' home in Kuliouou, 1929
The Watumull family's life in Kuliouou
Anecdote: Radha W. Homa's birthday
Carl and Marie Christensen Jensen
- 16 The Watumulls' Diamond Head home, 1930
Effects of the Great Depression, 1929
The Watumulls' economic views; practices
The Watumulls' home in Makiki, 1939
Hanahauoli School
Kumar and Elsie Jensen Das
University of Minnesota
- 17 Anecdote: the birth of David Watumull
Mrs. Otto Swezey
Dr. and Mrs. You Chan Yang
How Ellen Watumull overcame arthritis
- 18 The Watumulls' World War II experiences
The education of Lila, David and Radha Watumull
University of Oregon
Hanahauoli School; Lincoln School
R.L. Stevenson Intermediate School
The Watumulls and the Pratts
Anecdote: December 7, 1941
Mahatma Gandhi; U Saw; Tin Tut

- 19 The Watumulls' World War II experiences
The Dr. Maurice Gordon family
Hawaii Medical Association
Queen's Hospital
G.J. Watumull escapes schrapnel injury
Schofield Barracks
Elsie Jensen (Mrs. Kumar) Das
- 20 The Watumulls' World War II experiences
The Red Cross supply rooms
Communication during World War II
Battle of Midway Islands
- 21 Virginia J. Woolley's marriage to
Jay Ambrose Quealy, Jr., June 1942
The Watumulls' citizenship problem
The U.S. Supreme Court decision: Cable Act
Dr. Bhagat Thind
Ellen Watumull loses American citizenship, 1923
League of Women Voters and the Cable Act
Ellen Watumull's naturalization, 1931
Rita (Mrs. You Chan) Yang
- 22 G.J. Watumull's naturalization, 1946
Lila Ann Watumull (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney
Carl and Marie Jensen's philosophy
The G.J. Watumulls' philosophy

- 23 Ellen Watumull's education: Reed College
- 24 Story of Ellen Watumull's move to Hawaii
 - Professor Calvin Cady, Columbia University
 - Geraldine Aitken, music teacher
 - Hiram Bingham, I; Dr. John M. Whitney
 - Mrs. Clara Sutherland
- 25 Story of the Watumulls' meeting
 - East India Store
 - Mrs. Kathryn E. Mundorff
 - The Watumulls' marriage, 1922
 - Pacific and Asian Affairs Council
 - The Watumulls' citizenship problem
- 26 League of Women Voters
 - The You Chan Yang family
 - Story of the Watumulls' wedding
- 27 Matson Navigation Company
 - Elsie Jensen and Kumar Das
 - Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association
 - Kumar Das's accidental death
- 28 Lila Ann Watumull (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney
 - Story of the Sahneys' wedding
 - The Watumull Foundation, established 1942
- 29 The Watumulls' World War II experiences

- 29 Bellows Field
- 30 Roy A. Vitousek
The Watumulls' World War II experiences
Mahatma Gandhi
Dollar Steamship Company
Elsie Jensen (Mrs. Kumar) Das
The Gordon family
- 31 Capitol Market during wartime
Roosevelt High School
The Watumulls in Los Angeles, 1942
The Watumull Foundation, 1942
- 32 G.J. Watumull's medical problem
Dr. George Star White of Los Angeles
G.J. Watumull's work with the
National Committee for India's Freedom
Anecdote: Dr. Anup Singh, M.P.
Daughters of the American Revolution
- 33 Watumull Foundation lecturers:
Dr. Anup Singh and Dr. Taraknath Das
The Watumulls' home in Makiki
G.J. Watumull's final illness
Margaret Sanger and Planned Parenthood
- 34 Planned Parenthood conference in India
Anecdote: the Indian Sikh

- 34 Mrs. Dhanvanthi Rama Rau
Margaret Sanger (Mrs. Noah) Slee
International Planned Parenthood Federation
- 35 Anecdote: Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur
Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar
Dr. C. Chandrasekaran
Anecdote: the portrait of Gandhi
- 36 Khachaturian, New York artist
- 37 Ellen Watumull and Margaret Sanger in Solvang
International Planned Parenthood Conference
Mrs. Dhanvanthi Rama Rau
- 38 Ellen Watumull and Margaret Sanger in India
Anecdote: the Indian Sikh
Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru
- 39 Dr. Radha Krishan
Margaret Sanger: a word portrait
Noah Slee
Anecdote: Margaret Sanger in Hawaii
- 40 Description of Margaret Sanger's photograph
William Wyatt and Roselle Davenport
W.W. Davenport's book, Gyro
Lawrence Sperry
The East Indian community in Hawaii
- 41 The first East Indian in Hawaii, 1913

- 41 The Watumull brothers in Hawaii
Gobindram Jhamandas Watumull
Jhamandas Watumull
Rochiram Dharandas
East India Store, established 1913
- 42 G.J. Watumull's work for India's freedom
Anecdote: Dr. Anup Singh
India's sacred cows
Story of The Silver Pilgrimage
Justice M. Anantanarayanan of Madras
- 43 Story of "The Silver Pilgrimage":
A symphony by Alan Hovhaness
- 44 Ellen Watumull's memories of G.J. Watumull
Explanation of G.J. Watumull's name
G.J. Watumull: a word portrait
- 45 G.J. Watumull as an employer
Minnie (Mrs. Robert) Saiki
G.J. Watumull's citizenship, 1946
Lila Ann Watumull (Mrs. Brij Lal) Sahney
Anecdote: the Watumulls and cigarettes
Central Union Church
Story of the Watumull Foundation
- 46 The Watumull Investment Company
Ellen Watumull: Honorary Consul of India

- 47 Ellen Watumull discusses flouridation
 David Watumull's anti-flouridation action
 Hanahauoli School's music program
- 48 Ellen Watumull's school music program
 Real estate values in Hawaii
 Honolulu Academy of Arts
 The Watumull Foundation and the arts

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.